

Mr. Peter Ostrovsky Opening Statement to HASC Readiness Subcommittee

03 May 2021

Chairman Garamendi, Ranking Member Lamborn, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee on Readiness, on behalf of my entire family, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about our fallen son Marine Corps Lance Corporal Jack-Ryan Ostrovsky, who was 20 years old, when he drowned with 8 other Marines and a Navy Corpsman during a preventable AAV incident off of San Clemente Island CA.

Our son Jack-Ryan and his fraternal twin brother Samuel were born prematurely at 26 weeks; and were hospitalized for two and a half months in a neo-natal intensive care unit before they came home with us. They were both fighters from the get-go.

My wife Lynn Ostrovsky gave up her career as a flight attendant with a major airline to be a stay-at-home Mom. I'm a retired federal law enforcement officer who dedicated 31 years of my professional life to service with the Treasury Department and Department of Homeland Security.

As a teenager, Jack-Ryan loved swimming, mountain biking, hiking, snowboarding, marksmanship training and military history.

A year after graduating from high school and after we moved as a family to Bend Oregon, Jack-Ryan decided to enlist in the US Marine Corps. He told us that he wanted to serve his country and do things that you could not do in the civilian world. He wanted to start at the bottom as a grunt and become a Marine Corps Rifleman.

Jack-Ryan loved being a Marine and we loved that he loved being a Marine. With only 13 months of service, he was already talking about re-enlisting and his dream of pursuing a billet in special operations and making the military his life long career.

We will always be proud of Jack-Ryan. He followed in the footsteps of his great grandfather Bill Fischman who served in the Navy and his grandfather Jack Fischman who served in the Army, along with becoming the first Ostrovsky to serve in the US military.

His commanding officer described Jack-Ryan, as a future leader and a stand out, who would seek out fellow Marines that were struggling and offer them a kind word and a smile.

A week before the AAV incident, Jack-Ryan told me about his concerns with the AAVs and that, "they sink all the time." It was hard for me to believe that statement, but now I know that there was more to the story that was the basis for his concerns.

The loss of Jack-Ryan has destroyed our family's future plans. Jack-Ryan was supposed to be the next leader of our family who was going to create his own legacy of success through his military career. We were looking forward to watching Jack-Ryan build a family of his own and blessing us with grandchildren. Jack-Ryan was also supposed to look after his brother Samuel, who has suffered from a life-long educational disability.

When the Marine Corps briefed Lynn and I on the results of the investigation; we were shocked and disappointed by the top-down recklessness, gross negligence and lack of duty of care for our son and all of the Marines and Sailors in his AAV Company.

While reviewing the investigation report many issues stood out to me that are a cause for concern and questions. Namely;

Why were dead lined AAVs deemed to be in poor condition and not seaworthy assigned to a unit that would be deployed as America's maritime response force?

Why did my son's AAV Company not initiate any of the relevant pre-requisite egress training, which would have better prepared him and the others for such an emergency?

Why did the pre-exercise Confirmation Briefing not mention any of the waterborne risks associated with utilizing AAVs that were in poor condition and embarking Marines that were not adequately trained? But yet, the only identified risk was assessed to be "unlikely to occur" and was that there could be a "casualty to the assault force during embarkation/debarkation operations" on San Clemente Island and onboard the USS Somerset.

As an experienced federal investigator who has planned, conducted and approved many high-risk law enforcement operations, the lack of detail in the Briefing tells me one of two things, either it was intentional, as an alleged cover up for the lack of readiness, or the exercise planners were not qualified to appropriately assess risk, or perhaps both.

In my opinion, the entire AAV Company was placed at extreme risk due to poor equipment, inadequate training, and a poorly coordinated and monitored unsafe training exercise.

We expect that the Marine Corps and Navy hold accountable, from top-down, all of those who were responsible for this preventable catastrophic incident, through all of the means that are at their disposal and with transparency.

We also expect that US military systems of accountability and liability be modernized, as a way to ensure that every day moving forward Military Officers fully appreciate and know the realities of their burden of command, so that there is no place for recklessness and gross negligence in the US Marine Corps and the US Navy.